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WILHELM VON HUMBOLDT'S

LINGUISTICAL STUDIES.

BY

G. J. ADLER, A. M.

Late Professor of German in the University of the City of New York.

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J. J. ADLER.

WILLIAM VON HUMBOLDT'S

LINGUISTICAL STUDIES.

AMONG those who have labored in the department of General Linguistics and Comparative Philology, Wilhelm von Humboldt is one of the earliest and most successful. Commencing with the dawn of the century, his studies run parallel with those of William Schlegel, Raynouard, Grimm, Bopp; and if, on the one hand, he has accomplished less of specialty than most of his cotemporaries, he has, on the other, extended his horizon far beyond them, and is, in fact, the first who ventured to elevate the science into a universal one. Inspired by this idea, he not only made his investigations, both geographically and historically, co-extensive with the globe, but he also did not shun the labor of entering, with the spirit of true science, into the abstruser questions concerning the nature and origin of language, its relation to the human intelligence, to history, philosophy, civilization, humanity, and has left us the outlines of a system which has made his name illustrious. It is true that more than one of his positions have been controverted, that he has been accused of inconsistency, of vagueness, and of mysticism, and that few of the more recent investigators are willing to accept him without qualification; but this does not destroy the intrinsic value of his contributions, and we apprehend but little contradiction in asserting that no works in this department can be produced more suggestive, and more worthy of attentive study. It is on this account, and for the benefit of the student, that we now propose, in the first place, to give a rapid sketch of the history and chronological order of his researches, and then to add as complete and clear an exposition of his system as our proposed limit will admit.

After having for many years indulged in the somewhat desultory, but none the less earnest and assiduous study of classical literature and antiquities, of theoretical as well as

political philosophy and æsthetics, Humboldt at length began to feel the want of some central object for his intellectual activity, and one into which he might infuse the whole of its individuality and native force. Such an object presented itself to him in the science of linguistics, the outlines of which he happened to conceive towards the close of the last century. Near the end of the year 1799, we find him writing to the philologian Wolf that it was then his plan to illustrate the theory of æsthetics with practical examples, and that for that purpose he had already studied the old French literature, and was then engaged in examining the Spanish. "But even more than by the study of literature," he says, "I am attracted by the study of language. I am inclined to think that hereafter I shall occupy myself with it much more exclusively, and that a thorough and philosophically conducted comparison of several languages is a task for which, after a few years of earnest application, my shoulders might perhaps grow equal."*

The commencement of these new researches links itself to the accident of Humboldt's residence in Paris. It was there that, in the year 1800, his attention was attracted to the language of the primitive inhabitants of northern Spain, whose national peculiarities and history had already interested him some time before. And so rapid were his advances that by the autumn of that year he had already consulted all the works and manuscripts of the Royal Library in reference to his subject, which he dropped only to resume with new energy in the spring of the following year, while during the summer he spent several weeks in the Vasque provinces of Spain and France, to search some of their archives for new material, and to complete his examinations by personal contact with the inhabitants themselves.†

When, in 1802, he went as Prussian minister to Rome, his mind was at first occupied with the antiquities of the city, and with his translations from Æschylus and Pindar. But he had already advanced too far with his new science to forget it long or at all, and he soon returned to it, never to drop it again. "At bottom," says he to Wolf, "is everything I drive at even my Pindar, study of language. I think I have discovered the art of using language as a vehicle for traversing the loftiest and profoundest spheres of human existence, and I find mirrored in it the multiplicity of the entire world."‡

* *Werke*, vol. v., p. 214. ‡ Haym's "Wilhelm von Humboldt," p. 201.
† Haym's "Wilhelm von Humboldt," pp. 240–242.

To the study of the Vasque he soon added researches into the origin and affinity of European languages in general; and when, on his return from the Western Continent, his brother Alexander made him a present of the ample materials on the American languages which he had collected there, his horizon extended itself still further, and already promised to embrace the entire globe. And for these studies Rome itself was really to some extent the centre of the world. There was the Propaganda, whose object, although avowedly ecclesiastical, was yet intimately linked to a knowledge of the languages, and of a great variety of them. Humboldt did not fail to turn the religious object to scientific account; and during his residence at Rome, the rich library of the Collegio Romano, with other valuable collections, opened to him treasures from which at a later date his industry and philosophical acumen eliminated the science of comparative philology.

Humboldt's linguistical career, commencing, as we have already seen, in 1799, extended itself throughout the whole of the remainder of his life, that is to say until the year 1835. Its history presents to us three distinct periods, of which the first comprises his researches into the Vasque and the American languages; the second, those on the Sanscrit, the Chinese and the Egyptian hieroglyphics; and the last, those on the Malay languages of the Asiatic and Australian island-world, including, as the culmination of the whole, his justly celebrated dissertation on the structural differences of human speech, introductory to his great work on the old Cawi idiom of Java.

His first attempts proceeded from an ethnographico-historical point of view, and he himself confesses that he then looked upon the study of languages merely as "a science auxiliary to that of history and ethnography." It was in this sense that, in 1812, he published a prospectus of a monograph on the Vasque, in which he declared it his intention to examine into the manners, the language, and the history of that tribe, with a view to determine, if possible, the question as to whether it is to be considered a separate body, or merely a remnant of a larger family of nations, and how in that event it should be classified.* Of this monograph, however, nothing appeared except some fragments in one of his travelling sketches (*Reiseskizzen aus Biscaya*), until, in

* F. Schlegel's "Deutsches Museum," vol. ii., pp. 487 and 490. (No. 12.)

1821, he at length came out with his "Examination of the Investigations concerning the Aboriginal Inhabitants of Spain, on the basis of the Vasque language."* In this essay the author undertakes, through an analysis of the old Spanish names of places, to trace the earliest geographical distribution and history of the inhabitants of the Pyrenean peninsula, and professes his main object to be to invite other investigations relative to the primitive populations of the whole of western and southern Europe. From this ethnographical point of view, Humboldt, however, soon departed, when a few years after, at the request of Vater, he wrote his purely linguistical corrections and additions to Adelung's article on the Vasque language in the "Mithridates,"† and when, in a sequel to the promised monograph, he contemplated a searching analysis of the unique idiom in question. The change became still more complete after he began to include the study of the Romansh and the American languages, with a view to a more general comparison. He now declared it his intention to apply a systematic and exhausting method to the analysis of one language, and then gradually to extend the process to others, until they all might be arranged and classified in an immense universal encyclopædia of human speech. In this preliminary analysis of a particular language, his professed aim was "an intelligible exposition of all the individual parts of speech, their relation to each other, and to the totality of language considered as a representative medium; and lastly, of the relation between this medium and the objects represented." In thus passing from one language to all of them, and from all of them to language or speech, as such, he not only arrived at a metaphysical conception of his subject, but he also gave his previous ethnographico-historical researches a broader and a deeper background than they had before. He had, in other words, now reached the philosophy of language, and the point at which it coincides with the philosophy of history. It is true, that the details of his plan were as yet not entirely clear even to himself, and that on that account his language was often vague and mystical; but his fundamental idea was nevertheless already as correct as it was original and profound, and it was destined to gain clearness and consistency as he made new advances in his researches.

The second stadium of Humboldt's linguistical career

* Reprinted in *Werke*, vol. ii. † Adelung's "Mithridates," vol. iv.

commences with his inquiry into the Sanscrit. Up to the year 1812 he had taken but a distant interest in this language, and the American idioms, in addition to the Vasque, had occupied his attention almost exclusively. But about the years 1814 and 1815 he began to look more closely into the East, and he soon became convinced of the paramount importance of the ancient sacred idiom of India to the new science in which he had enlisted. He commenced the study of the language, therefore, by devoting an entire year of leisure to it, and subsequently made renewed efforts to perfect himself in it. It could not be otherwise, than that the character of this eastern mother idiom should have at once led Humboldt to a profounder insight into the general nature of language and to a clearer apprehension of its elements.

That this was really so, and that Humboldt made substantial advances in his new science, is manifest from several important contributions to the transactions of the Prussian Academy, of which he had become a member as early as 1810. In the first place, he read, in 1820 a dissertation "On the Comparative Study of Language, and its Relation to the Different Epochs of the Development of the Languages,"* in which he undertook to define the nature and object of his study, and to vindicate its dignity and independence. This dissertation was followed by another in 1821, "On the Province of the Historian,"† which, in spite of its title, was scarcely anything more than a preliminary to his linguistical researches; a generalized and independent development of that element of the science which approximates it closely to that of history. The third dissertation, read in 1822, exhibits a still more decided influence of the Sanscrit, and the importance of this language for the study of the philosophy of human speech. It was "On the Origin of the Grammatical Forms and their Influence on the Development of our Ideas,"‡ an essay abounding in significant suggestions in reference to the historical growth, the internal structure and the general nature of human speech. These three dissertations may be looked upon as the first expansion and intensification of the views advanced but fragmentarily some years before in his prospectus relative to the Vasque, and in the preface to his translation of the Agamemnon of Æschylus. They imparted to his studies a more philosophical direction, and led

* *Werke*, vol. iii., p. 269, *seq.* † *Werke*, vol. i, p. 1, *seq.*
‡ *Werke*, vol. iii., p. 241, *seq.*

the way to more important and decisive results. For, if to the English and the French be due the credit of having first brought the languages of the East to the knowledge of Europe, it was reserved for Humboldt to win Germany the honor of linking that knowledge to the ultimate and highest interests of man, and to transform it from ideal points of view into the order and consistency of a universal science.

But notwithstanding these advances, no one was more conscious than Humbold himself of the insufficiency of the results, and of the necessity of a more extended examination of details in order to secure a safe basis for his theory. It is on this account that, when he found the Chinese stood in contradiction to some of the general principles of his dissertations, he did not shun the labor of undertaking the study of this language likewise, and of comparing its peculiar characteristics with the results of his previous researches. It was then that the celebrated letter originated. addressed to Abel-Rémusat, *Sur la nature des formes grammaticales en général, et sur le génie de la langue Chinoise en particulier:* an essay in which his previously developed views concerning the nature of the grammaticals forms, the origin, development, and general structure of language, are partly corrected, partly expanded, or more clearly defined, with perpetual reference to the apparently abnormal and irregular character of the Asiatic idiom in question.*

But there was still another point which yet awaited his attention. This was "The Nature of Writing, and its relation to Language in general." This subject suggested itself naturally to him from Champollion's new discoveries respecting the Hieroglyphics, to the study of which he applied himself with great assiduity, and, in connection with it, also to the Coptic. That his researches in this direction, too, were as successful as they were earnest and profound, is manifest from several important dissertations, which he read before the Academy, chiefly during the years 1824 and 1825. They are entitled: "On the Phonetic Hieroglyphics of Champollion the Younger;" "On four Egyptian Lionheaded Statues;" "On the Relation between Writing and Speech;" and lastly, his imcomplete paper, "On Alphabetic Writing, and its Connection with the Structure of Language."

We have now seen enough of Humboldt's proceeding to perceive that heaimed at nothing short of the universality

* *Werke*, vol. vii., p. 294; and earlier separate edition, Paris, 1827. Its date is March, 1826.

of fundamental law in his linguistical studies. He could not, therefor, consider his position safe, as long as there were other languages, or groups of them, to be examined and compared with the results already obtained, in reference to a philosophical theory of speech. It was thus that, in 1827, he commenced a new series of researches; and this time they were directed to the group or groups extending from Sumatra to Easter Island, and from New Zealand to the Sandwich Islands; in other words, to the groups of the entire Asiatic and Australian island-world, in which he suspected the existence of a middle ground between the domains of the Hindu and the American languages. We thus find him already, in 1828, reading before the Academy an essay "On the Language of the South Sea Islanders," and between 1829 and 1831 applying himself with new zeal to the study of the Mexican.*

But he soon relinquished the American languages to younger investigators, to concentrate his attention within the limits of a narrower sphere, to the point where he suspected a contact between the civilization of the Hindus and the members of the Malay group. Such a point of contact he found in the Island of Java, in which there were manifest traces of Hindu influence, and where this influence culminated in the Cawi language, a peculiar, learned idiom, in its character and object similar to the Sanscrit.

The new study was soon attended with results, and he read an essay "On the Cawi Language" before the Academy as early as January, 1831. And so great an importance did he attach to this ancient idiom, as a point of departure for a more extended survey of the Malay group, that he resolved to subject both its gramatical and lexical eliements to a minute analysis. His plan in doing so was, in the first place, to prove it to be the result of the epoch at which Hindu culture flourished on the island, and then by an elimination of the Malay element, to make the latter the basis of an extended examination of the remaining idioms akin to it. It was to this study that Humboldt devoted the whole of the remainder of his life, and it gave rise to his great work "On the Cawi Language," the completion of which, however, he never lived to see, and which, as we have it now, was edited for the Academy by Buschmann, after the author's decease. The long and profoundly philosophical introduction to this

* *Werke*, vol. vi., p. 488, *seq.*; vol. iv., p. 302, *seq.*; vol. iv., p. 426, *seq.*; vol. vi., p. 526, *seq.*

work, however, as well as the portion of it which treats of the connection between India and Java, both of them have, fortunately for us, received the final touches of the author himself.*

Before speaking of this introduction, which embodies all the results of Humboldt's researches in that direction, it is necessary to notice a few more minor treatises composed between the years 1827 and 1829, all of them relating to important points connected with the theory of speech. The first of them is a fragmentary dissertation "On the Dualis,"† read before the Academy in 1827, in which the method of his science is developed with a clearness and precision such as none of his previous writings ever exhibited, and in which the grammatical form in question is analysed in its most intimate connection with the nature of speech. The next is the no less remarkable and profound essay "On the Affinity between the Local Adverbs and the Pronouns in certain languages,"‡ in which the origin and function of the pronoun are discussed, with illustrative examples from the Japanese, the Armenian, and the Tongish. In 1828, he read before the French Institute a dissertation "On the Affinity of the Pluperfect, the Reduplicating Aorist, and the Attic Perfect of the Greek, with the Tense-formations of the Sanscrit;"§ and the same year we find an English essay "On the Best Means of ascertaining the Affinities of Oriental Languages," addressed to Sir Alexander Johnston, and read before the Royal Asiatic Society of London on the 14th of June.‖ He had, in a similar manner, some time before, read an essay "On the nature of the Verb," based upon observations on the American languages; and there are a number of other dissertations of a similar character which have thus far never appeared in type.

From all the documents which we have here enumerated it would not be difficult to construct a system of the philosophy of language as designed by Humboldt. But the author has exempted us from this labor by drawing the balance of the results of his immense researches, in the admirable introduction already spoken of, in which, with a profundity and acuteness rarely equalled, he discusses "The Structural Differences of Human Speech, and their Influence

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* *Ueber die Kawi-Sprache auf der Insel Java.* 3 vols. Berlin, 1836—1839

† *Werke;* vol. vi., p. 562, *seq.*

‡ In the Academy's *Abhandlungen*, Berlin, 1830.

§ *Cf. Werke*, vol. vi., p. 258; vol. vii. p. 352. ‖ *Werke*, vol. vi., p. 218.

on the Intellectual Development of the Human Race."* Here, once more, he, as in fact in all his previous studies, links languages and linguistics not merely to ethnography, but to the historical development of the race, to civilization, culture, in fine, to the highest problems connected with the nature of man. It is this introduction, therefore, which, in an attempt to expound Humboldt's system, shall have to form the main basis for our proceeding, while, at the same time, it will be our duty not to neglect such hints as we may be able to glean from the remaining portions of his writings already mentioned.

In this exposition of his system, Humboldt discusses the question concerning the origin, the definition, and the assential nature of language, the process of speech as exhibited in its constitutive elements, in articulation the relation between thought and sound, the formation of roots, words and grammatical forms, &c.; then, further, the organic principle and character of language, the idea of language, and the classification of languages; and finally, the development of language in history, and its relation to the latter. We shall now endeavor to give a brief outline of Humboldt's answers to all these questions.

The question concerning the origin of language is older than the time of Plato's Cratylus, from which we perceive that at that time it was current even among the sophists, and must have been so before them among the philosophers. It recurs again in Artistotle and his followers, and among the moderns in Bacon, Hobbs, Berkeley, Leibnitz, Spinoza, and the French materialists of the last century. All these philosophers agree in attributing a human origin to language, and they only differ in their method of accounting for it; some making it a matter of necessity and invention, others the natural result of our physical and intellectual organization. Among the Germans, the empirical psychologists of the eighteenth century attempted a pragmatical explanation, and like many of their predecessors, made human speech the result of arbitrary convention, while their opponents, the theologians, vindicated for it no less august an origin than a divine one, by claiming the Divinity himself as the first teacher of the human race. The latter of these hypotheses obtained very extensively, until the time of Herder, who modified it by investing its human origin,

* Reprinted in *Werke*, vol. vi., pp. 1—425. Original quarto edition, Berlin, 1836.

with a profounder significance. According to him, language is neither so far above man that the Divinity should have been necessary to invent it for him, nor so far below man that the brute should have been able to invent it. It is the necessary and conjoint result of sensibility and reflection, both of them acting upon the basis of man's natural organization and of his connection with the external world. It is his reflection that has converted the sounds of nature into significant signs, and invested them with a human element; and it is, again, his reflection which, in connection with feeling, has converted the forms and colors of the external world into sounds of speech.

Language is thus neither the inevitable product of mere physical organization, nor the mechanical manifestation of mere emotion, and least of all is it the result of arbitrary social convention; but it originates in the depths of the conscious human soul, and constitutes the distinctive characteristic of our race *ab extra*, as reason does that from within.

Now, although Herder's theory was much more poetical than philosophical, Humboldt could yet scarcely do otherwise than follow in its traces, and develop more consistently and scientifically what his predecessor had only indicated and invested with the garb of imagery. Humboldt's preparation for the question, however, was a much more thorough and extensive one than that of Herder. It was based not only on immense researches, but also on the no less earnest study of philosophy, more especially of the Critical System, and of the great poets Goethe and Schiller, of both of whom he had been not only a reader, but one of the most eminent critics.

With Humboldt, therefore, the theory of a divine origin could no longer be a question, any more than the pragmatical or materialistic philosophical solutions by which he was preceded. In opposition to the notion of an "invention," he advances "that language could not be invented unless its type already pre-existed in the human intelligence;" "that man is man (*i. e.* a human being) only in virtue of speech, and that consequently to invent speech he would already have to be one." *

Humboldt is equally averse to the theory which derives language from the necessity of mutual assistance. "Speech," he says, "flows spontaneously, without any necessitation or even design, from the human breast. Man is essentially a

* *Werke*, vol. iii., p. 252-253.

singing being, but he links thoughts to his notes."* This explanation is substantially the same as that advanced in another passage, where he seeks the source of language in our "general capacity for speech," and designates it as the natural development of a faculty characterizing man as such.† And so far is he from making it the product of reflection or convention, that in another place he declares it "a veritable and inexplicable wonder that such a thing as a language should spring from the mouth of a nation, but a phenomena no less astonishing than that which is repeated daily among us, although overlooked with indifference, in the stammering accents of every child."‡.

In his letter to Rémusat, he declares himself expressly against the notion of a direct divine intervention, and accounts for the origin of human speech by the *génie inné à l'homme pour les langues;* but at the same time he vindicates for this innate faculty so high a place in our nature as to approximate it to the divine, and maintains inherent in it an *étincelle divine, qui louit à travers tous les idiomes, même les plus imparfaits et les moins cultivés.* §

Besides thus defining his position in reference to the contested point concering the origin of language, and claiming it to be purely human one, Humboldt also undertakes to give us the key to its comprehension, and this he asserts to be "the physiology of the intellectual man." In language, he says, the human intellect operates according to certain laws precisely like nature, and speech is the effect of our rational instinct. It is, therefore, the product of nature, but of the nature of the human reason; and if we enquire into the production of language, we have to look for it, in the individual as well as in the collective masses called nations, at the point where the first symptoms of intellect begin to make their appearance.‖

These definitions contain the determination of the general nature of language. As a product of the intellectual instinct of man, it is as perpetually alive as this instinct itself. It is not to be regarded as a *caput mortum*, but as a living production, and as the act of this production itself. Its very essence consists in something that is in a state of constant and momentary motion. It is not so much an ἔργον, or work, as it an ἐνέργεια, or activity. Even its fixation by means of writing can at best be but an imper-

* *Id.*, vol. vi., pp. 60-61. † *Id.*, vol. vi., p. 204.
‡ Schlegel's *Museum*, vol. ii., p. 498. § *Werke*, vol. vii., p. 337.
‖ *Werke*, vol. ii., p. 240, vol. iii., p. 253; vol. vi. p. 428; vol., p. 336.

fect preservation of one which, in every instance, needs a living intervention to resuscitate it. And this energy, or general faculty of speech, is not an isolated power, but the entire man in the totality of his powers, as for the latter are required or concerned in the production of speech.*

The most general and characteristic function of language is that it is a medium or link of communication. It constitutes, in the first place, the connecting link between the finite and the infinite nature of man. It bears the imprint of the double nature of man blended into a symbol. In language our spontaneity and receptivity act together, and the subjective unites itself with the objective By the act of speech the external world becomes converted into an internal one; and it is thus that nature, its individual objects as well as the laws by which we conceive it regulated, becomes translated into something that is human. Language is thus a perpetual prosopopœia. As the isolated sound establishes a relation between the object and ourselves, so language, as a totality, constitutes a medium between us and nature, as the latter produces its impressions on us either from without or within. It is an intellectual world linked to sounds and occupies a sort of middle ground between man and the external; and it not only represents objects to the mind's eye, but it also gives us the impression produced by them, thus blending and uniting our receptivity with the self-determining, active energy of our being.† In like manner, language is a medium of communication between one individual and another, between the individual and his nation, between the past and present. The life from which it emanates breathes its living sound into the sense receiving it. In general, speech can only be conceived of as the joint product of simultaneous co-operation, in which each one is obliged to bear at once his own labor and that of all the rest.‡ Understanding and speaking are thus only different effects of one and the same cause, and this is none other than the capacity of speech essential to both. In him who understands, as well as in the speaker, the subject-matter must be evolved from his own inward power; and what the former receives is only an incitement in harmony with that which himself can, and is expected to, impart.

* *Werke*, vol., vi., pp. 40 and 42. *Einleitung*, p. 304. (The paging of *Einleitung* is here invariably that of *Werke*, vol. vi.)

† *Einleitung*, pp. 58, 59; *Werke*, vol. vi, p. 530. ‡ *Einleitung*, p. 23; *Werke* vol. iii., p. 18.

It is this phase of reciprocal activity, which, more than anything else, establishes the purely human nature and origin of language; and it is this, too, which offers us the best solution for the antinomies presented to us in the manifestations of speech. For, in the first place, language is never the work of an individual, but invariably the property of the entire nation, while at the same time it is always destined to serve as an instrument to the greatest imaginable diversity of individuals. It thus contains the double quality of differentiating itself, as one language, into an indefinite number of others, and of again integrating all these into one, as mere modifications of itself. Language is, in the second place, a perpetual genesis, and its very essence consists in the act of speaking; or in speech. Yet this constantly recurring process does not constitute the whole of it, and it contains also something that is permanent and firm. It produces within itself a stock of words and a system of rules, through which, in the course of centuries, it grows up into an independent power, and it thus becomes something more than the evanescent process of speaking; it establishes itself, at the same time, as the result of a multitude of previous acts of speech. This apparent contradiction constitutes the peculiarity of language. It is in its very nature passive and active, subjective and objective, at the same time.

Both these antinomies are accounted for completely by the human character and origin of language. For, in the first place, individual speaking is linked to the speaking of the nation, and the speaking of nations to speech in general, which has its centre in the common bond and unity of our nature. For man does not possess any such thing as an absolutely isolated individuality; the I and the Thou are the essential complements of each other, and would in their last analysis, be found identical. In this sense there are circles of individuality from each weak, helpless, and perishable member of our race as far back as the time of our hoariest antiquity. Without this, says Humboldt, no such thing as interchange of thought, or even comprehension, would ever have been possible.* So, in respect to the second antinomy, the apparent contradiction involved in the activity and passivity of speech, Humboldt again finds it accounted for in the unity of human nature already spoken of. "In that which originates in something which is properly identical with

* Schlegel's *Museum*, vol. ii., p. 498.

myself, the distinction of subject and object, of dependence and independence, becomes obliterated. Whatever there is in language, traditional and established, determining and limiting me, can come from no other than a human source, and one that is most intimately connected with myself; hence, even that which is strange and unintelligible to me in human speech can be so only to my momentary individual nature, and not to my original or real one."* By thus referring our ability to speak and understand to a universal elements common to all the members of the race, Humboldt moves it to the point where the vestiges of its human origin become blended with the divine, as far as man, in virtue of his intellectual and moral nature, can claim himself akin to the Divinity, and this is the only sense in which to him the question of a Divine origin can have any scientific value or significance.

After this brief outline of Humboldt's views concerning the origin and general nature of human language, it is now in order to give a cursory survey of his further attempts to analyze the process of speech as exhibited in its constitutive elements, in articulation, the formation of roots, words and grammatical forms, with their mutual relation and dependence on each other.

The process of speech being, as we have already seen, based upon the rational instinct, it is, first of all, necessary to enquire into the manner in which this instinct acts in the process in question. We have, in the first place, to answer that the action of this process can only be explained, as far as it is susceptible of explanation, in connection with the necessary mechanism of our intellectual life. When brought in contract with the external world, the activity of our senses unites itself synthetically with an internal act of the mind, and this joint operation gives rise to sensation. From the confused mass of our sensations another process, similar to the first, gives rise to perception, and when a perception isolates itself, it assumes the character of objectivity in reference to the mind and becomes a conception. Now, the process of speech is so closely linked to this process of the intellect and senses, that the one cannot be said to be complete without the other. The conversion of a perception into a conception, *i. e.*, into something objective, which may be readmitted into the mind and reflected upon, presupposes

* *Werke*, vol. vi., p. 65.

already the use of speech. "In speech," says Humboldt, "our intellectual life makes way for itself through the lips, and the product of this operation is instantaneously and first of all returned to our own ear. The indistinct process of intellection gathers itself together into a word, as light clouds are wont to collect on the clear sky." It is through speech that man represents to himself, as to another Me, the varied phenomena of the outward and the inner world, which thus become part and parcel of his consciousness. Language is thus not only the necessary channel, but the very form and body of his intellectual activity, and may therefore be said to be identical with it. It is on this account that speech becomes indispensable even to private thinking, which, be it never so solitary, is always a sort of dialogue with our own Thou, or a soliloquy. Nevertheless, says Humboldt, language is never formed by one man only, or in solitude. On the contrary, "the objectivity of our perceptions becomes augmented when the word coined by ourselves is heard from the mouth of another," and "man cannot fully comprehend himself, until he has tested the intelligibleness of his words by submitting them to other."*

Such, then, is the fundamental law which, according to Humboldt, presides over the genesis of language. We have next to enquire what he says concerning *the concrete process of this activity, and concerning the constitutive elements of speech.* His definition of this process, in so far as language is limited to mere speaking and the totality of speech, is that it consists in "the perpetually reiterated labor of the mind to convert the articulate sound into a fit vehicle for the expression of thought." This labor involves two constitutive principles, of which the one is the internal aptitude for speech, and the other the external sound. It may be regarded as a sort of genesis, in which the inner element or thought, in order to manifest itself, has to overcome an impediment in sound. This leads us naturally to enquire, How are these two elements connected, or what is the relation between thought and sound? This, Humboldt maintains to be entirely beyond our comprehension. "The inseparable connection between thought, the vocal organs and the ear, as exhibited in the act of speech, is based upon an original, unalterable arrangement of our nature, and is not susceptible of any further explanation."† But, although the exact

Werke vol. iii., p. 13; vol. vi., p. 590; *Einleitung*, p. 53, 55.
Einleitung, pp. 42, 51, 88, 304.

nature of this connection must remain a mystery to us, we may, nevertheless, by a careful observation and comparison of the two elements, arrive at a certain degree of intelligence, so as to perceive at least the possibility of a close internal harmony and mutual interpenetration.

In the first place, there is manifestly *a certain elective affinity and general analogy* between thought and sound As the former, similar to a flash of lightning, or to a blow, concentrates the entire perceptive faculty upon a point, to the momentary exclusion of everything else, so the latter bursts from the lips with an abrupt distinctness and with a certain degree of unity; and as the former takes hold of the entire soul, so the latter possesses pre-eminently a penetrating power, capable of thrilling every nerve. "In the sound, the ear receives the impression, not only of a movement, but of a real act, such as is also the thinking activity itself." As thinking, in its most human relations, is an aspiration from darkness to light, from the limitation of our finite being towards the infinite, so the sound of speech flows from the depths of our breasts in an outward direction, and in its passage finds a wonderfully adapted material medium in the subtlest and most easily moved of all the elements, the air, the apparent incorporeality of which is in itself, to some extent, a sensuous representative of the mind." The living sound of the voice proceeds from our breast like the very breath itself of our existence, and in this way communicates the life itself from which it emanates to the sense receiving it. The production of sound for the purposes of speech is aided to no small extent by the admirable arrangement of nature exhibited in the upright posture of man, from which the rest of the animals are excluded, and which almost seems to be the result of the elevating power of speech. For the latter does not want to lose itself blunted upon the ground; it requires free passage from the lips of the speaker to the one addressed, to be accompanied by the expression of the eye and of the countenance, or by the gestures of the hand. and thus to suround itself simultaneously with every thing that characterizes man distinctively as such.*

The second and still more manifest analogy between thought and sound is found in the phenomenon of *articulation.* The organic connection and mutual dependence of parts involved in this phenomenon constitute the essence of

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* *Einleitung*, pp. 51, 52, 53.

speech, which contains nothing that might not in its turn be either a part or the whole. Articulation properly belongs to the inward operations of the mind as well as to the outward process of speech; it contains the point of contact at which the requirements of thought and the adaptedness of sound meet each other, and it is their contact at this point that gives rise to language. The articulation of the sound contains the thought-forming property of speech, while that of thought contains its power to convert sounds into language. As, in the process of intellection, the mind at first divides an indefinite mass of sensations into elements or parts, which it then again strives to combine into something more general, or into a whole, so the organs of speech proceed with sound, which they at once separate and unite. They thus become the executors of the articulating power of the mind, while the latter possesses the passive property of suffering itself to be converted into articulate sound. Articulation is, therefore, the connecting link between thought and sound, and it contains the possibility of speech. That this is really so, we learn even where one of the elements is wanting, in the deaf-mute, who in virtue of this intimate connection between the process of intellection and the organs of speech, learns to decipher the thoughts of another from the mere movement of his lips. An exact definition of articulate sound cannot be given, except so far as its general characteristics coincide with those of the articulating activity of the mind, and every attempt at a merely physical description or analysis of it must prove a failure. An articulate sound, we know, differs widely from a confused one, and from a cry, yell, shout, or shriek, which man produces in common with other animals. But this difference is so far from giving us any positive result, that we cannot even exhaust its definition by characterizing it as musically high or low, long or short, shrill or dull, hard or soft. In fact, its real nature can rather be observed than comprehended, and that only in connection with the idea of speech, which, through the medium of it, generates and binds together thought and sound. Articulate sounds possess the property of eliciting ideas as soon as they reach the ear, and this because either some one of them is capable of effecting it, or because the formation of any one of them is such that it both admits and requires a number of others, homogeneous but specifically different, and capable of being referred to determinate classes, and all of them adapted to entering into necessary or arbitrary relations with

inarticulate ones. The two sounds are here brought into a direct conflict with each other, and this mode is on that account not exempt from a certain degree of crudity. It is almost exclusively confined to the names or the characterization of objects, and generally disappears with the advancement of a language. In the symbolical designation there is an indirect imitation of some quality which the sound and object have in common. For this purpose the objects are designated by sounds which, partly in themselves, partly in comparison with others, produce an impression on the ear similar to that which the object itself leaves on the mind; as, for example, the terms *stand*, *steady*, *sturdy*, *stout*, give us the impression of something firm, &c. This principle has exercised great power in the primitive formation of words, and its effect is even visible in those indications of more general relations which have already become known to us as grammatical forms.

In the analogical designation, finally, the words whose significations are more or less closely related, are also expressed by similar sounds. There is, however, here no direct reference to the character inherent in the sounds themselves, as there is in the symbolical, but only to the affinity or analogy of sense. The principle is, therefore, but a secondary one, although it has likewise shown itself pre-eminently prolific of results.*

But not content with the enumeration of these different links between thought and sound, Humboldt, in another passage, seeks to demonstrate an additional one in a preliminary act of the mind. In making sound the representative of thought, we introduce a connection of things the nature of which does not admit of anything like real union. This heterogeneity, therefore, not unfrequently requires a third element, in which they may meet, as it were, on common ground, and which may serve them as a connecting medium. This medium, he says, is always of a sensuous nature; as, for example, in the words *understanding* and *perception*, in the former of which we associate an intellectual faculty, in the latter an intellectual act, with the purely physical operations of *standing* and *seizing*, and so in numerous other instances of the sort. It should therefore be our aim in all our etymological researches to trace this sensuous medium wherever we discover or suspect

* *Einleitung*, pp. 80–85.

evidence of its existence, and thus to rise from the concrete terms of language to those radical institutions and emotions by means of which each one of them, according to its peculiar genius, links together thought and sound in the production of its words. This principle, however, presupposes all the rest already named, and is only applicable in cases where the question turns on abstract terms the, sense of which is what we usually call a secondary one. It, therefore, presides rather over the relationship than over the formation of words, and operates more like an auxiliary to the connection of sound and thought than like an original mediating energy.*

But however much all these analogies may serve to illustrate the obscure connection between thought and sound, it after all remains true that the intellectual and phonetic elements of speech are extremes that never can be reconciled completely, and that language, in spite of all the synthetic power inherent in it, will always remain a labor and a conflict, with its irradicable heterogeneity of thought and sound on the one side and the mutual dependence of both of them on the other. Thought can as little divorce itself from speech, says Humboldt, as man can lay aside the features of his countenance. Hence the mind perpetually strives to make itself independent of the domain of speech, and this simply because the word always is a limitation of its thoughts and emotions, which it never completely expresses, and the nicest shades of which are often in danger of being lost or marred in the too general and more material element of sound. All that it gains or saves, however, in this struggle is always again added to the word, and this perpetual antagonism, the intellectual powers being properly alive, gives rise to an ever increasing refinement of a language, and to a greater affluence of significant expressions.†

The perfect union of thought and sound, the proper and energetic interpenetration of the phonetic and intellectual elements, constitute the highest perfection of language, the ideal and the goal towards which it is ever tending, but which it never completely attains. The genesis of language in its most rudimentary form is an essentially synthetic process, and this process renews itself until there is a more or less complete coincidence or balance of the two elements of speech. In proportion to the success of this synthesis,

* *Einleitung*, pp. 109–111.

† *Einleitung*, p. 110.

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each other. They thus differ from mere animal sounds or musical notes solely in their design and in their susceptibility of significance, in other words, of representing thoughts. The only general formula to which we can reduce them as a class is that all articulated sounds belong to speech, and conversely.*

Mere articulation is, however, no more than the lowest and most general condition of the production of speech, and with it we have not as yet arrived at the genesis of the constituent parts of speech called *words*. It is true, there is no language without articulation, *i. e.*, without the sounds expressed by letters and syllables; but it is no less true that there is something more than bare articulation, when by means of words and sentences, language becomes really the expression of thought. The word is, therefore, the point at which the articulate sound, whether it consists of one syllable or the union of several, properly becomes speech. In the word we for the first time meet with a real coincidence of the unity of sound with the unity of conception essential to the definition of speech. Words are thus the proper elements of speech, and they are to each other and to their totality what the individual is to his species and to the *ensemble* of the animated world around him. Finally, the word, with its varied relations, is the limit up to which language is a self-productive and distinct operation of the human intellect.†

In an analysis of the process involved in the genesis of words, we have again to distinguish the intellectual and the physical or phonetic side of it. Here the process in each direction exhibits three distinct stages, which, although always blended in practice, are yet manifestly a triple operation. The mind, in taking cognizance of the different objects which strike the outward or the inner senses, seeks, in the first place, to isolate them and to comprehend them each as separate and distinct,—in other words, to form conceptions. It next endeavors to seize the analogies and differences of the individual objects, and to form more general categories to which it may refer them, as, for example, those of variety, species, genus, &c. It, lastly, either perceives or constitutes certain relations, by means of which the objects or conceptions are connected, or supposed to be connected, with each other.

* *Einleitung*, p. 67; *Werke*, vol. iii., p. 244; vol. vi., pp. 537, 538, 545.
† *Einleitung*, p. 76.

Precisely so in language we find the *roots and radical parts of words* corresponding with the conception of isolated objects, and really the expression of it, however true it may be, that in the actual nexus of discourse they rarely, if ever, appear alone or without the sign of some more general relation to speech. The intellectual act which marks the conception of an object is accompanied by another which refers it to a determinate category of thought or speech; in other words, to the purely objective designation of an object is added a sort of subjective or logical rubrication, through which that designation becomes linked to one of the general categories of speech. The two operations combined give rise to a phonetically complete word, which then appears either as a noun, verb, adjective, or other part of speech. But these words again, and lastly, never appear isolated in discourse, which consist of a complex and variously related tissue of thought. The phonetic expression of this third stadium of the process is found in the grammatical forms, as exhibited in case, number, person, mood, tense, voice comparison, &c.*

The question here again rises, How are the two sides of the triple operation just indicated, the phonetic and the intellectual, connected with each other, in other words, in what relation does the sound of a word stand to its signification? The answer is again, that their connecting link resides in articulation, but here in a higher degree or power of it than in the production of mere letters or syllables. We have already seen that the very definition and most essential nature of articulate sound involve a tendency to significance, and it is this same general tendency which in the genesis of the word results in a determinate signification. The province in which this principle shows itself most active is more especially that of the grammatical forms, by means of which the words are correlated and connected in discourse.

Besides this general process of articulation, but yet as the direct consequence of it, we have to distinguish three different modes of designating objects or thoughts employed in speech, and these are the *imitative*, the *symbolical*, and the *analogical*. In the imitative designation the tone or note characteristic of an object is reproduced in the word, as closely as articulate sounds can be made to correspond to

* *Einleitung*, pp. 75, 97, 222, 128.

language approximates the domain of art, of which the very nature demands a complete representation of the ideal in its material form. The natural result of this consummation of language is artistic beauty, and this, in its turn, always constitutes an infallible test of its inherent general perfection.*

After this brief exposition of Humboldt's views respecting the origin and constitutive elements of speech, we now proceed to add what he says concerning some additional properties connected with the existence and phenomena of language, as, for example, its *organism*, its *form*, and *character*.

The structure of a language is to its minutest fibres an organic one, and everything in it is based upon analogy. As the direct emanation of a both physically and intellectually organic being, it partakes of the nature of everything organic, in which each part can exist only through the other, and the whole is animated by one all-pervading principle. This emanation, it is true, is but a gradual one, but it is nevertheless of such a nature that the first word already contains and presupposes the whole of it, and everything that belongs to the essential properties of speech is unconsciously given at once and as the direct consequence of the faculty of speech. Language may be compared to an immense web, in which each part stands in a more or less distinctly visible connection with the other, and all of them to the whole. In speaking, from whatever point we may proceed, we never touch more than a particular part of this web, but always and instinctively in such a manner as if all the remaining parts, with which that one must of necessity be in harmony, were present at the same time. The languages cannot be considered as mere aggregates of words; each one is a system according to which the mind links thought to sound. Each one is, lastly, also animated by a principle of organic unity. As soon as a people or a human intelligence takes in elements of speech, it must necessarily link them together into a sort of unity, although it may do so involuntarily and without becoming clearly conscious of the process, and this simply, because, we cannot conceive of the possibility either of individual thinking or of mutual comprehension without the operation of a principle like this.†

As each language constitutes an organic whole, so each is, secondly, possesssed of its peculiar *individual form*. The

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* *Einleitung*, pp. 104, 108.

† *Einleitung*, pp. 73, 85, 107, 113, 189, 338; *Werke*, vol. ii., p. 240; vol. iii., pp. 243, 253; *Kawi-Sprache*, vol. ii., p. 220.

effort of the mind to elevate articulate sound into the expression of thought operates in every language in a determinate, uniform, and constant manner. The *ensemble* of the homogenous and permanent, considered in its connection and systematically represented, constitutes the form of a language. This form is the complete objective representation of the individual *nisus* by means of which each nation succeeds in making language the expression of its emotions and its thoughts. It can, therefore, be fully comprehended only in connection with the totality of a language, although it is no less active in each and even the minutest element of it. Commencing with the very alphabet, it manifests its regulating power through etymology, until it reaches the subtlest niceties of syntax, and pervades the entire organism of the language as one of its most vital principles.*

But the province of grammatical forms is not the only one demanding the attention of the linguist. There is a higher and profounder element in language, which, however difficult it may be of exact analysis, may yet become a subject of feeling and reflection. The Sanscrit, Greek, and Latin, for example, are closely allied to each other, and exhibit on many points a striking similarity of etymological and structural organization. Nevertheless, apart from even the differences of this organization, these languages are each of them possessed of a distinctive individual *character*. There is in the history of every language an era at which it may be said to have reached its maturity of growth, that is to say, at which itsgeneral form and structure are more or less complete. At this point the activity of the nation rests from the production of the language itself, and passes on to the *use* of it. The people at large, the teachers of the people, the poets, historians, and, finally, the grammarians, now cultivate the language and employ it for their purposes. It is the peculiar manner in which this is done that gives rise to what we have just designated as its character. The phenomenon, however, links itself directly and intimately to the very nature of a language. The use of it produces, on the one hand, a feeling that there is something more than is directly expressed by it, and which, under its influence, the mind has to supply; and, on the other hand, the impulse to express, nevertheless, in suitable terms, whatever affects the mind. This feeling and this impulse, operating in conjunction, constitute the

* *Einleitung*, pp. 41—49; *Kawi-Sprache*, vol. ii., p. 221.

basis of the character of a language, which, to some extent, forms one of the primitive features of it, although it does not become distinctly developed until, as we have already said, it has become a more or less complete vehicle for thought. The character of a language manifests itself in a variety of ways. It may be observed in its etymological forms, in its manner of forming compounds, in the signification of its words, in its synonyms, and, lastly, in the laws which regulate the construction of its syntax. It appears, however, still more distinctly and completely in the two grand divisions of speech, in poetry and prose, in the culminating points of which language transcends its strict organic limits and passes into the domain of art. It is at this point that the philosophy of language meets on common ground with that of literature and history.*

We have thus far considered language only in its most general properties, and as the result of the universal human faculty of speech. Within these limits we might with equal propriety say, on the one hand, that the race is possessed of but one language, and, on the other, that each individual has a special one of his own. Between these extremes, however, we meet with the multitudinous circles of national differences, within which language appears as the external manifestation of the intellectual life of large masses of men. "The best definition of a nation," says Humboldt, "is, perhaps, that it is a collection of men possessed of a peculiar language produced by itself, and the languages of the human family differ among themselves only because, and in so far as the intellectual peculiarities of the nations are distinct."†

This unity of all language on the one hand, and the no less marked diversity on the other, leads us naturally to the enquiry, What is the relation of the different languages to the ultimate object and general idea of human speech, and on what principle are we to base a *classification* of the various idioms of our globe? In reply to this enquiry, Humboldt refers us perpetually to the essentially identical idea, or rather ideal, of langnage inherent in the human mind, and the different languages are to him simply the result of the more or less successful attempt to realize that ideal. In this connection he again isolates the two factors concerned in the production of speech, of which he says the internal or intellectual is always directed towards uniformity in languages, while

* *Einleitung*, p. 195, *seq.* † *Ibid*, pp. 39, 48, 208.

the external or phonetic is maintained to be the constitutive and dominant principle of their differences. And this is quite natural; for the external articulate sound alone constitutes the reality of speech, and admits of far more variations than the operations of thought. It alone depends upon the peculiar constitution of the vocal organs, which gives rise to the alphabet and constitutes the basis of every language. And apart from this dependence on the vocal organs, the articulate sound is regulated by peculiar laws and habits, based partly on the facility, partly on euphony of expression, and these laws, although likewise possessed of a certain degree of uniformity, yet necessarily give rise to many variations in their special application. To this we must add, lastly, that every individual object of sensation arises from such different causes that the possibility of its variations cannot become a matter of exact calculation.*

From this it might, at first glance, appear that the intellectual process of speech, in other words, the articulation of thought, must be the same in all languages. But this is not really the case. All that we are warranted to affirm is, that this element is possessed of a greater degree of uniformity, but it, nevertheless, contains several causes for essential differences. For the intellectual power concerned in the genesis of speech not only exhibits differences of degree, but it also involves the operation of forces, the results of which cannot be estimated with exactness by our intelligence. The imagination and the feelings give birth to individual forms, in which the individual character of the nation again makes its appearance, and in which, in spite of everything that may be claimed as individual, the multiplicity of the manner in which the same may be repeated with different modifications extends itself *ad infinitum*. To this we may, lastly, add, that the human intelligence itself, and independently of its connection with speech, exhibits differences, and that these may make their appearance in improper or imperfect combinations, from which even the most perfect of languages are not exempt.†

From these considerations it appears, that the differences of human speech depend upon the intellectual as well as upon the phonetic form of it, and we can estimate them only from the general result of the language-forming power as exhibited by the different nations of the globe. They show

* *Einleitung*, pp. 8-10, 18, 50, 87, 93, and 806. † *Einleitung*, p. 94, *seq.*

themselves more especially in the manner in which the internal and external forms are brought into coalescence with each other, and they are, therefore, part and parcel of the entire form or organism of the languages. If, now, we wish to determine the relative value of the different languages, we must, says Humboldt, bring their individual form into comparison with one *which we conceive as the most perfect*, and all the excellencies and defects of existing languages must be estimated according to the degree in which they approximate the form in question.*

Now the form of a language is, as we have already seen, nothing more or less than its peculiar method of uniting thought and sound, and its excellence or relative perfection must, therefore, depend upon the energy, intensity, and depth of this synthesis, which in its concrete manifestations, we have already learned to be the process of forming roots, words, and grammatical forms. It is more especially in the last of these three operations that we have to observe the character of this synthesis, it having here the double office of furnishing us at once the designation and the categorization of our thoughts. It is this last stage of the process which Humboldt calls the axis, around which the relative perfection of a language turns.†

There are, he says, three methods by which the process of speech accomplishes the function just indicated, and these are based either upon *inflection* or *isolation*, or on *agglutination*. The purest and most perfect of these methods is that of inflection, in which the designation of the conception and the indication of its grammatical category is exhibited in a state of complete coalescence, so that a double element appears, on the one hand, as an indivisible unity, and, on the other, nevertheless open to every requirement of speech. The question is here to preserve the identity of a word, and yet to show it under different forms with a more or less different sense, and destined to express a different relation. This may be done either by an *internal change* of radical vowels or consonants, as in *sing*, *sang*, *sung*, *song*, or by the addition to the root of certain letters or syllables, which have no separate sense of their own, and to which, as a sort of natural growth *ab extra* Humboldt applies the name of *accretions* (*Anbildung*), as

* *Einleitung*, p. 306.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 122, 253.

for example, in *to love, loving, lover, loved.* The bond of union which links the two elements together in both these instances, is essentially symbolism, which operates with the assistance, and upon the basis, of the articulating faculty. In direct opposition to this method is the second, or that of *isolation*, which encases all the words of a language inflexibly in the radical form, without admitting any of the modifications belonging to inflection. In this case, the synthetic power of the language extends no further than the most elementary coalescence of thought and sound, or to the formation of roots. The language here does not assume the responsibility of indicating the grammatical categories of the words, but leaves the business of supplying them to the mind itself, and consequently, relies upon a sort of *grammaire sous-entendue*, as, for example, the Chinese, which we may cite as a true representative of this method. Between the extremes of isolation and inflection we encounter, in the third place, the method of *agglutination*, which consists of a more or less mechanical addition to the word instead of an inflectional accretion. There is here very little more than composition, but, nevertheless, an intention to inflect, although the conatus is a failure. An example of this imperfect inflection is furnished us by the Turkish.*

After demonstrating these etymological grounds for difference among languages, Humboldt next proceeds to examine into the syntactical variations, and shows that the same principles which underlie the verbal form extend themselves to the construction of sentences. He, therefore, here again gives *inflection*, *isolation*, and *agglutination*, but to these he finds it necessary to add a fourth class based on *incorporation*. The most perfect conceivable method of uniting words into sentences is based upon inflection, and the languages that employ this principle, therefore, occupy the first, or rather the absolute, place among those of the race. In this instance the word with its terminations or other modifications already and in itself indicates its relation to the sentence, which out of its materials thus carefully prepared constructs itself in the most natural and easy manner. The anxiety to hold the sentences together like a single word is here entirely superfluous, and the parts in which it naturally presents itself to the mind are without inconvenience left distinct, owing to the facility with which they admit of being built up into the unity of

* *Einleitung*, pp. 122, 133, 151, 374; *Werke*, vol. iii., p. 302, vol. iii., p. 327.

the whole. The languages based on *isolation* have this in common with the inflectional, that in their syntactical economy they allow their words to remain distinct, and even to a greater extent than the latter. In this case, however, the unity of the sentence is but imperfectly indicated, and its form deviates but little from that of a mathematical equation. The construction of the unity is here left mostly to the mind, which, however, for this purpose makes use of a number of accessory aids, as, for example, of variations of the voice, of a particular arrangement or succession of the words, and also sometimes of separate words destined for this function. The method of *incorporation* differs from both the preceding by treating the sentence with all its essential parts more like a single term than like a whole composed of several terms. The Mexican and other American languages furnished Humboldt with examples of this method. The entire sentence here assumes the shape of one form, and is linked together and even pronounced as one word. The leading idea seems to be that the sentence is not to be constructed or gradually built up out of separate parts, but coined at once complete, and with the imprint of an indivisible unity. The influence of the *agglutinating* process on the syntactical arrangement is not expressly developed by Humboldt, although in his classification of the languages he gives those under this category a separate place.*

Besides this analysis of the synthetic act which presides over the formation of words and sentences, Humboldt directs our attention to certain "criteria and symptoms," by which he says, languages may be studied and distinguished. He mentions more especially three points which, although already included in the sphere described, and essential elements of it, are yet important enough to deserve more careful examination. They are the Verb, the Conjunction, and the Relative Pronoun, the particular functions of which in the different languages are calculated to throw a flood of light upon their structural organism, and more especially the verb, which in many instances is in itself sufficient for the characterization of a language. In illustration of this principle Humboldt actually makes the attempt to analyse some of the languages according to the character of their verbs.†

We thus perceive that Humboldt advocates an *ideal of language* in what he terms the most *perfect form* of it, and

* *Einleitung*, pp. 135, 166–167, 186; *Werke*, p. 307. † *Einleitung*, p. 56.

that he regards all the idioms of the race as more or less successful realizations of this ideal. The languages of the Indo-Germanic family, the old Sanscrit, the Gothic, Greek, Latin, German, and also the Shemitic, approximate nearest to this standard, and consequently may serve us as a term of comparison for the rest. The latter, it is true, all of them exhibit a tendency in the same direction, but they never reach their goal to the same extent, or have sought to reach it by the wrong road. There is, therefore, a great contrast between the languages of the purely regular and those of a more or less deviating form. These deviations extend themselves to an infinity of detail, and many of the languages of this group scarcely admit of any such thing as reference to an exhausting principle or to definite classification. With regard to the languages in general, the principles of inflection, isolation, agglutination, and incorporation even, are nothing more than abstract categories. They all of them bear evidence of the presence of one or more of these forms, and to a determination of their relative excellence the only question is as to how far they have admitted those abstract forms into their concrete formations, in other words, what has been the principle of this admission or admixture. From all this it is evident that Humboldt does not pretend to furnish us with anything like a complete or even a real classification. He only provides us with the principles necessary for the work by pointing out to us the general categories, according to which the individual concrete languages of the globe may be measured and arranged in groups or classes.*

The language which, according to Humboldt, approaches nearest to what he calls the perfect or ideal form is the Sanscrit, the completest and most distinguished representative of the inflectional system. The most conspicuous example of the system diametrically opposed to this, that is to say, of that of isolation, is the Chinese, which constitutes a separate genus by itself, and to such an extent that, unlike all the rest of the non-inflecting languages, it does not even exhibit the slightest tendency towards grammatical forms. For, while all the remaining languages of this class show more or less advances towards inflection, the Chinese entirely repudiates the road, and carries out its principle of isolation to its most rigid consequences. It is on that account, doubtless, as a language, inferior not only to the Sanscrit, but even

*Einleitung, pp. 192, 193, 307, 308, 313.

to the Shemitic languages, although it is none the less true that this its formal defect is in another way converted into a virtue, and that the less of an external grammar it possesses, the more it shows of what may be termed an internal one. It compels the mind to supply the grammatical relations of its words, for which it has no separate expression, from its own resources, and this preponderance of the intellectual element has been refined into no small degree of culture. It is, therefore, far from occupying the lowest place among the non-inflecting languages. Of all the existing languages, as far as they are known to us, the Sanscrit and the Chinese thus constitute the two polar extremes, and, though not equally adapted to intellectual development, they are yet not unlike in point of internal consistency, and as perfect representatives of their respective systems. All the remaining languages occupy the middle ground between these two extremes, inasmuch as all of them must necessarily approximate either the Chinese method of divesting words of all expressed grammatical relations, or the Sanscrit method of clothing them with every variety of them, and even to redundance. They all of them, however, differ from the Chinese by exhibiting a tendency towards real grammatical forms, and must on that account be ranked as a third class. But they are, nevertheless, but loosely connected with each other; all that they have really in common are merely the two negative qualities of possessing, on the one hand some grammatical forms, and on the other, no such thing as genuine inflection.*

The question now arises, In what relation do the languages of this extensive middle class (*i. e.*, all those between the inflecting and the Chinese) stand to each other and to the normal form, and do they exhibit any such phenomenon as a gradual development or elevation? To this Humboldt confesses inability to give us any more than a general and reserved answer. The concrete forms of all the different languages are the combined effect of two causes: the result, on the one hand, of the genius for speech common to all nations, and, on the other, of the impediments in the way of its full development, residing partly in themselves, partly in the circumstances of their situation. Each of these concrete forms, therefore, in so far as it deviates from the normal structure, presents two phases, of which the one is the

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*Einleitung, pp. 329-334; *Werke*, vol. vii., pp. 331-332; *Kawi-Sprache*, vol. ii., p. 52

negative index of the limit of the language-forming energy, the other the expression of the positive result arrived at in its advances towards the general end. In the negative part, says Humboldt, we might, it is true, conceive of a gradual elevation, estimated according to the degree reached by the creative energy of the language; but the positive phase, which exhibits frequently an extremely complicated individual structure in the case of even the more imperfect languages, is far from always admitting of so simple a determination. Now, if we are unable to establish any such graduations, we have also to despair of the possibility of an exhausting *classification* of languages, and this so much the more as the present state of linguistics does not even furnish us the external empirical basis for such a result. The only thing that might be done would be a provisional classification for special purposes, in which we might assume particular phenomena connected with the languages for our point of departure (as, for example, the character of the verb), not failing to keep our eye attentive to those points which bear most clearly and decisively upon the intellectual peculiarities involved in them. Anything further than this, says Humboldt, would necessarily be one-sided, and only of relative value to the science of linguistics. *

The last point we have here to consider, in reference to Humboldt's views concerning language and the languages, is *their development in time*, and their *relation to history*. This is a point to which Humboldt assigns but a subordinate place in his almost exclusively theoretical and ideal Introduction, but it is one on which he dwells emphatically in some of his earlier linguistical dissertations, and is on that account well worth attentive consideration. In the presence of every language we find ourselves in the midst of an historical fact, which, like man himself, presents to us the spectacle of something infinite unfolding itself gradually in the order of time, and of which both the past and future are shrouded in the depths of an inscrutable abyss. The primordial stadium of the history of languages is, therefore, beyond the reach of exact analysis or demonstration. All that we can do is to approach it to a certain distance, and to venture some conclusions, based partly on posterior phenomena, partly on the general laws of speech. To facilitate the study of this portion of his theory, Humboldt, in different parts

* *Einleitung*, pp. 334–338; *Werke*, pp. 332–333.

of his writings, assumes *three periods for the historical projection of every language*, of which the first is that of its primitive organization, and of the more or less complete development of its essential forms; the second that of its culmination at a point beyond which its peculiar structure does not admit of any further change; and the last that of its decadence, which is attended with more or less disintegration, and may terminate either in permanent stagnation and corruption, or even extinction, unless some of its former vigor is resuscitated by the influence of men of genius.*

The first of these periods must always remain more or less of a *terra incognita* to us. It is true, that the languages present to us the elements of a primitive form, but behind this we can never penetrate, inasmuch as the circle of these primordial elements appears to be closed, and in the condition in which we now find the development of our faculties, never destined to return again. It is a remarkable fact that no language has ever been discovered beyond the line of a perfect grammatical organization, and that none has ever been surprised in the undulating movement of its formation. It is, therefore, extremely probable, that a special epoch in the history of the race was originally assigned to the production of new languages. Into this primitive history of the languages, which Humboldt compares to the antediluvian revolutions of our globe, there is, he says, but one way to penerate, and this is analogous to that pursued in our geological attempts to illustrate the history of creation. In pursuance of this method, he here and there ventures, although with great reserve, upon a number of conjectural conclusions, based partly on the general nature of man, partly on the ideal element of language itself.

If language is an organism, it cannot originate in any other way than instantaneously; for it must, at every moment of its existence, be possessed of that which stamps it as a whole. By this we are not to imagine, however, that it exists at once complete in all the details of its forms; it only implies that the totality of its organism is already involved in its first word, at least potentially, and as the law that conditions the functions of the intellectual power concerned in its production; so that the actual genesis of the language nevertheless remains a more or less gradual process. It is on this account, and in this sense, that Humboldt, on the

* *Einleitung*, pp. 12, 63, 188, 189, 211.

one hand, declares every attempt to assign a chronological order or sequence to the formation of the essential parts of speech an absurdity, while, on the other, he yet ventures to maintain some of those parts more primitive than others. He thus endeavors to show, in opposition to those who make language a gradual development of the interjection, that *the personal pronouns* express relations so intimately and essentially involved in the very act of speech, that they must have existed from the very beginning, and that the prepositions and interjections are rather of a subsequent than of an anterior date. Besides this, in adopting Bopp's distinction of *objective* and *subjective roots* he declares the latter, as those in which the expression of, or a reference to, our own feelings and emotions constitutes the substance of the sense, more primitive than the former. These subjective roots are manifestly the coinage of language itself. Their definition admits of no latitude; it is in every instance the expression of a distinctly marked individuality, and absolutely essential to speech. They may, therefore, be supposed to have sufficed, to some extent at least, until the languages gradually became expanded into something more complete. Of the objective roots, Humboldt declares those denoting *motion* and *quality* as nearest allied to the subjective, and probably no less primitive. It follows, he says, from the very nature of the development of speech, that the terms expressing motion and quality should have also an historical priority, since they are naturally, and often in the same act, those which are employed to designate the objects themselves.*

The exact limit between the organization-period and the second is not clearly drawn by Humboldt, who sometimes moves it this way and then again the other. He thus, for example, is now unwilling to decide as to whether the languages reach that point of maturity gradually and imperceptibly, or rapidly and more or less at a single cast.

At another time he separates the earlier organic development of a language from the changes undergone in consequence of foreign admixture, and designates the coalescence of several dialects as one of the most inportant moments in the formation of new languages, while at the same time he remarks that these two stages of development cannot be exactly separated from each other. He then again declares it probable, that no language ever attains to its maturity

* *Einleitung*, pp. 117, 119; *Werke*, vol. iii., pp. 242, 245, 253.

before it has passed through several intermediate states, and that in this process its primitive mode of conception becomes modified and broken to such an extent, that the original signification of its elements no longer remains perfectly distinct.*

Be this, however, as it may, the second period of a language is that of its *inner development and perfect organization*, in which it is in the possession and in the free use of all its functions, and beyond which its peculiar structure admits of no further changes. During the earlier formation-period, the nations are occupied more with the language itself than with its object. The languages, says Humboldt, originate, as in the physical world one crystal links itself to another.

The process is a gradual one, but advances in obedience to a law; when it is ended, the language may be said to be complete, and it now becomes the part of the mind to use it, and to make itself at home in it. Considered from another point of view, this transition of the national activity from the language itself to the use of it appears as a relaxation of the *nisus formativus*. In proportion as the mass of matter produced by the language-forming process increases, this external mass, reacting upon the mind, asserts its peculiar laws, and imposes a check upon the independent intervention of the intelligence. At this point, the language, in connection with the peculiar genius of the nation, commences a career, in which neither of the two factors can be called independent, but where both of them derive aid and inspiration from each other. The second period may, therefore, be said to be that of *the literary activity of a nation*, and of the direct antecedents of it. The first period develops the form, the second the character of a language.†

To these two periods Humboldt, in a passage of his introduction, adds a third, which he characterizes as that of *old age and decadence*. In following the course of the languages still further, we observe the phenomenon of a second relaxation or exhaustion. As the formative tendency ceases at a certain point, so the mind that subsequently uses, enriches and refines the forms prepared for it, may grow weary of its work, and an era may commence in which the language in a certain sense outgrows the intellect. The latter is then no longer self-productive, but exhausted and inclined to trifle with the language, until the forms and constructions once

* *Werke*, vol. iii., pp. 244, 246, 254; vol. vii., pp. 349, 350.
† *Einleitung*, pp. 195—200.

really significant gradually degenerate into more or less empty sounds. In this period the character of the language fades, and its course remains one of deterioration, unless the genius of individual writers resuscitates it for a new career of energy and power.*

It must be borne in mind, however, that the stages of development here indicated are purely *theoretical*, based partly on the general nature of man, partly on the ideal elements of speech, and the question now arises: How far they quadrate with the facts presented to us by the *actual history* of the languages as examined and classified above. Under this head Humboldt offers us a variety of interesting observations, which we propose now to digest in the order in which they relate, first, to the organization-period, and, secondly, to that of the internal or complete development of the languages.†

For these historical as well as for the ideal considerations, the highest form of language again offers us the most convenient point of departure, from which we may then determine others with an equal degree of certainty. The gradual development of the faculty of speech must manifest itself by certain indications, and these indications will furnish us a basis for some chronological determinations. The gradual advances of a language towards grammatical formality, says Humboldt, may be divided into *four successive stages*. In the first stage the language merely designates objects, and leaves it to the mind to supply the connecting or formal links of speech; but it endeavors to facilitate this operation partly by the arrangement of its words, partly by making terms that properly designate objects or things under certain conditions expressive of relations. The construction here consists either of isolated words or of entire sentences and phrases in the shape of words. This expedient is, in the second stage, reduced to a certain degree of regularity; the arrangement becomes more definite, and the terms employed to designate relations, in a modified or secondary sense, gradually lose their independent signification, and to some extent their original sound. We have here, therefore, in the first place, a more settled arrangement, and, secondly, a number of terms occupying a sort of middle ground between particles and words. In the third stage, the arrangement advances to a certain degree of unity,

* *Einleitung*, pp. 199, 200.

the hybrid class of terms expressing the relations annex themselves to the words in the shape of affixes; but the connection is not yet a firm one, the joints are yet visible, and the whole presents the appearance rather of an aggregate than of an organic unity. The construction is here represented by mere analogies of forms. In the fourth stage, the expression of the formal relations becomes complete. The word becomes *one* with its termination, and nevertheless remains susceptible of a variety of modifications. Each word, moreover, now represents a particular part of speech, and has thus not merely a lexical, but also a grammatical individuality. The words denoting the grammatical forms are no longer encumbered with their old secondary signification, but have now become the pure expressions of distinct relations. In this last and highest stage the construction is represented by real forms, by inflection and purely grammatical words. In giving this division we must not forget, however, that it belongs to an earlier dissertation, where Humboldt himself calls it a mere abstraction, and on that account did not admit it into his Introduction. Nevertheless, it may furnish us some useful hints; and when approximated to the classification given above, the first stage will be found to comprise the isolating and incorporating forms, the third the agglutinating, while the last and highest will exactly correspond with the inflectional.

Commencing with these primordial elements, which to some extent are yet visible in the Chinese, in the incorporating and other defective idioms, nearly all the languages may be said to have developed themselves to a greater or less degree of perfection. The advance consists partly in dropping superfluous forms, partly in condensing and refining certain words and expressions originally used to designate specialities of minor importance into the expression of necessary grammatical relations. Grammatical words are converted into affixes (*i. e.*, either prefixes or suffixes), and affixes eventually terminate in genuine inflection. This is manifestly the course pursued by those languages which are either entirely devoid of inflection, or whose system is at any rate defective and incomplete. In illustration we need only cite the extensive intermediate group between the Chinese and the Sanscrit, in which we find exemplified all the different stages of the process, from its crudest beginnings to real inflection. †

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* *Werke*, vol. iii., pp. 275—256, 296—297. † *Lettre à Abel-Rémusat*, p. 354.

The same principle, upon the whole, applies to the languages of the perfect type, and the majority of them probably passed through the same or similar stages of development; with this difference, however, that the generalization of the primitively purely special relations, and the rejection of superfluous ones, has, in these instances, become a more decided success, and that the relational affixes have become terminations, *i. e.*, coalesced with the roots into one inseparable and organic whole. But while this is doubtless to a great extent the case, it cannot, on the other hand, be denied that the languages of this class had in all probability real grammatical forms from the very beginning. The more successful and more perfect metamorphosis of mere analogies of grammatical forms into real ones may be regarded as evidence of a more felicitous genius for language, and this superiority on the part of certain nations has doubtless at a very early stage produced more or less completely organized, in other words, really inflectional or inflected parts of speech.*

The case is entirely different with the Chinese. For although it must have commenced in the same way as the rest of the languages of the same type, it did not make the same progress. It did not advance so far as to convert its grammatical words into affixes and the affixes into inflection. Some cause or other appears to have from the beginning diverted this language from the course pursued by others, and to have coerced it into a path entirely peculiar to itself. Humboldt regards this imperfection as the combined effect partly of the phonetic poverty of the language, partly of the intellectual inertness of the nation, and partly of the influence of their writing. The expedients, by means of which their talent provided so successful a remedy for these defects are in his opinion of a later date.†

But Humboldt surveys the historical development of the languages from still another point of view, and this is their *phonetic side*, as illustrated in their *transition from the monosyllabic to the polysyllabic state.* All the languages, he maintains, commenced with the construction of monosyllabic roots, and gradually advanced to their polysyllabic form by means of composition, annexation, and inflection. That this is so is evident not only from the nature of the case, but also from careful analysis, based on

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Lettre à Abel-Rémusat, p. 335. † *Lettre à Abel-Rémusat*, pp. 335–338.

reliable historical examinations. In the invention of speech the conception is the result of the impression produced by an object of external or internal sensation, and the vividness of this impression elicits the utterance of a sound, which is the word. In this way it could not be expected that two sounds would be likely to correspond to one impression; and, if two consecutive sounds really were produced, they would only be evidence of two impressions from the same object, and of the formation of a compound in the very inception of the word, without on that account militating against the monosyllabic principle. In their advances towards the polysyllabic state the languages move hand in hand with their advances towards a purer and more complete grammatical structure. In respect to the number of syllables and the method by which they are strung together, the Chinese and the Sanscrit again present themselves at the two polar extremes, between which all the remaining languages group themselves according to the law of intermediate gradation.

The Chinese from this point of view again appears as the language, which for some cause or other had become arrested in its course, and on that account not made the same advances with the rest. For, although it really sometimes admits of composition, it is yet essentially monosyllabic. Its internal structure, the want of all inflection, combined with the peculiarity of keeping the syllabic sounds separate even when the mind has to effect a union of conceptions, retains it in the bondage of the isolating principle. The languages of genuine inflection, on the other hand, as represented by the Indo-Germanic family and the Shemitic, have advanced to the greatest affluence of polysyllabic roots. For they originally likewise commenced with monosyllabic roots, although it cannot be denied that they at the same time evinced not only dissyllables, but even purely inflectional forms. The natural operation of time was here accelerated by superior intellectual endowment, and it is probable that in the mind of these nations the word was already one before it was uttered for the first time. Hence their fondness for euphony and the rhythmical relations of speech, which links itself directly to the method of indicating at once the thought and its relations in the unity of the same word. The polysyllables of these languages are, therefore not mere compounds or other more or less loosely connected forms; they are really and organically words c

several syllables. In regard to the languages of the intermediate group, Humboldt shows, from an examination of the Burmese and the Malayan, that they likewise follow the same course of development in respect to the number of syllables, with this difference, however, that, while, on the one hand, they transcend the limit of the Chinese, they, on the other, never reach the goal of genuine inflection. They remain upon the middle ground of composition, agglutination, and partial inflection, and the majority of their syllables coincide but imperfectly with the unity of the word. Hence it happens that in these less-favored languages we not unfrequently encounter a large number of syllables unrhythmically strung together, while in those of the inflecting type a smaller number always blend themselves into a more or less harmonious whole.*

In his observations on the organization-period of the languages, Humboldt, lastly, also directs attention to the difference between those which have branched off in different directions from the same original stem, and those which have sprung up from the ruins or the decay of others and under the influence of external circumstances. The modern descendants of the Latin, the modern Greek, and the English are examples of the latter class, and offer us a variety of interesting historical data in illustration of their development. While, on the one hand, it cannot be denied that the modern representatives of the classical tongues, the Romansh idioms, and the Romaic have lost more of the forms than of the formative energy of their originals, and that their organisms are still more or less pervaded by some of the old spirit, it is nevertheless evident, that these new languages, in order to be such, had to receive from the nations that produced them a new principle of unity, and a new type of individual crystallization.†

Nor is the influence of history on the ulterior development and refinement of the languages in their second period any less apparent than it is on the period of their primitive organization. It is more especially the fate of their form and the development of their character which in this connection claims our attention. In respect to the former, Humboldt points us to the remarkable phenomenon, that the inflectional affluence of the languages begins to diminish as they

* *Einleitung*, p. 386; *Werke*, vol. vii., p. 419.
† *Werke*, vol. ii., p. 240; vol. iii., pp. 306, 346; *Einleitung*, pp. 295–300.

all pass beyond the effervescence of their earlier formation into the period of their actual use.

Grammatical words are made to take the place of terminations, and if this process is continued, an inflecting language may to some extent approximate those originally not at all akin to it, and governed by an entirely different principle. While formerly the production of the instrument of thought constituted the chief source of pleasure, the main object now becomes its ready and successful practical application. In consequence of this, the signification of many of the primitive elements becomes obscured, and the habit of usage gives rise to a neglect of some of the structural specialities and of the exact preservation of the original sounds. The pleasure of the imagination, derived from the ingenious combination of phonetic signs with a full and euphonious syllabic cadence, surrenders to convenience of comprehension, and the function of many of the old forms is now performed by auxiliary verbs and prepositions. Such are the most prominent formal modifications to which the languages are subjected during their second period. Those of their character are no less apparent, although they are more difficult of comprehension; for they relate not so much to the languages themselves as to their application to practical or literary purposes. The character of a language is that of the nation itself, in so far as the latter manifests itself through the medium of its language, or invests it with its peculiar atmosphere, and a classification of the languages according to their character would be a characterization of the nations themselves. The decisive difference pointed out by Humboldt under this rubric is, that in some languages and nations the purely intellectual and moral element preponderates, while in others the external and practical is the dominant one. The history of the development of languages in this direction, however, leads us beyond the proper limits of linguistics, and coincides, in fact, with literary history. It is on this account that Humboldt in his Introduction offers us a variety of interesting observations concerning the origin and progress of literature. He, in the first place, directs our attention to the double form which a language may receive, on the one hand, from the teachers and poets of the nations, and on the other, from the usage of the masses, among which, in opposition to the literary idiom, it may gradually assume the characteristics of a popular one. He discusses the influence which the professed grammarians may exercise upon a language, and devel-

ops, with the touches of a master, the origin of poetry and prose, their affinity and difference. He contrasts the rhetorical and scientific applications of prose, and characterizes the epoch of the rise of science and of its subsequent expansion into erudition. He notices, lastly, also the introduction of writing as a new era in the history of a language, and its importance to literature, while in conclusion he points out the difference between the earlier natural poetry and the later of a more artistic type.*

After this general outline of Humboldt's theory of human speech, it will not be out of place to state briefly what he advocates concerning *the province and object of comparative linguistics*. That this is a study to which he attaches the highest dignity and importance: it is, after all that has already been advanced, scarcely necessary to remark. He claims it emancipated from the trammels of every external consideration and cultivated entirely for its own sake. It is thus alone, he maintains, that, like every other true science, it can be made really to subserve the highest end of our being, which is nothing less than that we should become clearly and rationally conscious of ourselves and of our relations to the visible and invisible around us.†

The science of linguistics, like the history of the languages themselves, divides itself naturally into two parts, of which the one has chiefly the external organism and the form, the other the internal development and the character, of the languages for the object of its researches. The former, therefore, occupies itself with comparison in the broadest and most comprehensive sense, while the latter seeks to penetrate into the minutest niceties and the profoundest depths of human speech. ‡

The method of the first part is essentially that of *natural history*. For, the organism of language has its root in the physiology of the intellectual man, and the analysis of its organic differences leads us directly to the investigation of the entire province of human language and of the intellectual capacity of which it is the emanation. The comparison required is, therefore, far from being the fragmentary and superficial registration formerly in vogue; it must have order, method, and consistency. Considered from this point of view, the different languages of the globe are so many

* *Einleitung*, pp. 198–199, 214, 230, 251, 289–293; *Werke*, vol. ii., p. 265.
† *Werke*, vol. iii., p. 241; vol. vi., p. 564. ‡ *Werke*, vol. iii., pp. 247–248.

species of the same universal genus, while even the meagerest idiom of the remotest savage becomes too noble a work of nature to be beneath our notice, and must find its place at least as a variety, if not as a species, in the grand chain of which it constitutes an essential link.*

To facilitate and complete this process of comparative investigation, Humboldt proposes, on the one hand, monographs of entire languages, comprising their specific peculiarities, their analogies and links of affinity with others, and of as many of them as can be drawn within the circle of our enquiry, and, on the other, monographs of individual parts or members of the organism of speech, that is to say, of particular words, classes of words, grammatical forms, &c., as they present themselves with their resemblances and variations in the different languages of the globe. The combination of these two methods will complete the physiological part of the science, and, if successfully applied, will eventually result in "an outline of human speech considered as the universal medium of thought, of its comprehension and extent, the necessity of its postulates and laws, and of the possibility of their application." †

The examination of the languages in a more advanced state of culture, as displayed more especially in their character, leads us to a knowledge of their adaptedness to the grand objects of human speech, and from this point of view their differences constitute not so much a fact of natural history as of intellectual teleology. Investigations of this kind, however, can be instituted with success only in the case of those languages which have advanced far enough to have a literature, and which in this way have become a more or less complete mirror of national types of thought and feeling. It is at this point where the science of linguistics and philology meet to some extent on common ground. The former should, therefore, never be entirely divorced from the latter, and where analysis of language, as far as it has entered into literature, is concerned, a philological treatment based on written documents becomes indispensable. In fact, the connection between the two sciences is far more intimate than might at first appear.

The organism of a language contains already the germs of its refinement, and its character can develop itself on no other basis than that of its specific form. The one can,

* *Werke*, vol. iii., pp. 248–250; *Einleitung*, pp. 191–192.
† *Werke*, vol. iii., p. 250; vol. vi., pp. 562–585.

therefore, not be well studied isolated from the other, and the physiological and historical methods must proceed, hand in hand. In other words, the study of the grammar and the lexicon should never be separated from that of literature, and, in the contemplation of the sublimest work of genius, we should never lose sight of the effect resulting from the organic peculiarities of its language. The problem of the linguist is then always a double one; he has, on the one hand, to enquire in what way and how far man has succeeded in the production of his language. and, on the other, what relation the different languages sustain to the intellectual life and the ideal ends of the human race; in other words, how the individuality of a nation has influenced its language; and how the latter, in return has reacted upon the intellectual advances of the nation and of the world. The minutest elements and the most complicated models of human speech are thus alike subjected to his scrutiny; nor should he exclude from his researches the questions relating to the origin and the ideal perfection of language as included in Humboldt's theory examined by us above. *

When contemplated from its highest point of view, however, Humboldt moves the science of linguistics into close proximity to that of history, or rather the philosophy of history and of humanity. It is the business of the linguist to show to what extent and with what success the ideal of language has accomplished its realization among the different nations of the earth, and to do so properly he has to observe, with due consideration, the connection between their languages, their civilization, and their intellectual attainments, and never to lose sight of the general culture and advances of the race. From this point of view, the differences of human speech are no longer a mere diversity of sounds, but essential differences of intellectual development (*Weltanschauung*), while, on the other hand, they all have, nevertheless, their central point in the ideal of humanity, for which Humboldt claims the most conspicuous place in history. The realization of this ideal is aided to no small extent by language, which more than anything else in man, binds together the entire race, and links alike its national and individual peculiarities to the universal human elements of our common nature. †

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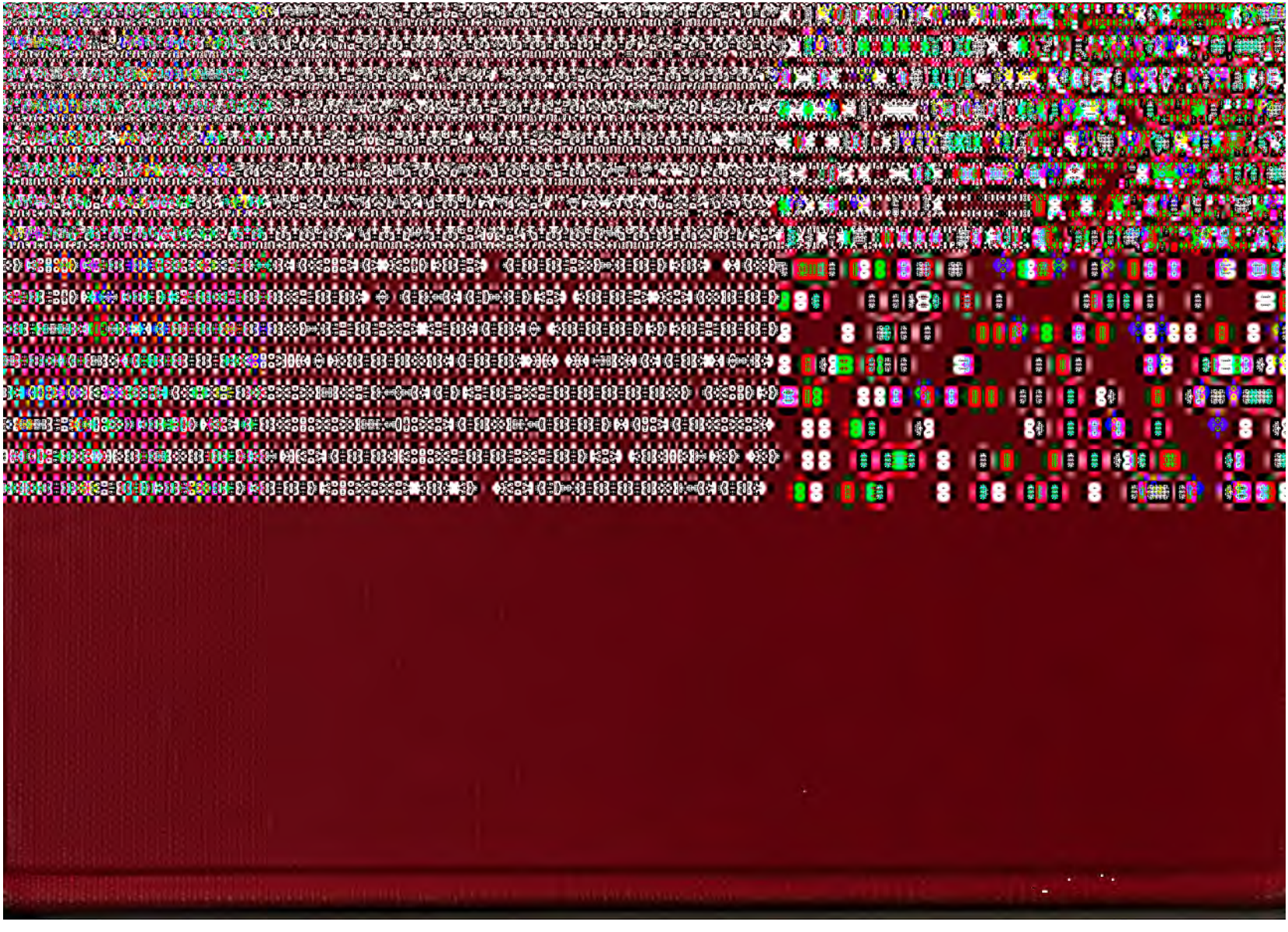
* *Werke*, vol. iii., pp. 247, 251, 267; vol. vi., p. 428; *Einleitung*, pp. 206 and 207.

† *Werke*, vol. i., p. 24; vol. iii., pp. 247, 426; vol. iv., pp. 428, 564; *Einleitung*, p. 11.

CORRIGENDA.

PAGE.	LINE.	READ.	INSTEAD OF.
12....	Note ‡....	"*Abhandlungen*"	"*Abhandlungan.*"
15....	9	...."a phenomenon"	"a phenomena."
15....	19	...."*qui luit*"	"*qui louit.*"
16....	4	...."as far as"	"as for."

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